



Notes to assist in educating people in the dangers of predators online and the steps often used in grooming people.

These notes are designed to be used in conjunction with 'The Onliners – Grooming Study' animation and associated animations.

Ensuring the safety of children and young people online is one of the most significant issues facing parents, carers and educators today. Predators are sophisticated and utilise whatever means at their disposal to gain the trust of vulnerable children and young people and lure them to various harms. In order to combat this, it is essential to be aware of the hidden dangers of being online.

Young people are currently being targeted for sexual exploitation, radicalisation, bullying, money laundering, drug running, scams, terrorist activities, activism and many more illegal and harmful activities.

The tactics used by some predators can be broken down into steps to assist in identifying how people are targeted. These steps don't always happen in this order, however below is a guide to some of the steps used by predators.

Step 1 Contact

Contact can be made anywhere that chat takes place online. This includes via: social media, gaming sites, photo sharing, YouTube and 100's of over sites. Often predators will pretend to be a friend of a friend or find a similar interest, such as games, to initiate the contact.

Online interactions are completely different to friendships offline. No one knows how old the person is, or if they are male or female. You don't know if you are talking to a computer chat app that someone has made to go looking for people to start chatting with. You don't have the same senses online that you have offline. These senses and your intuition offline are essential to let you know if you feel good about the person, if you feel safe with them or if you sense something isn't quite right. It is impossible to tap into these senses online. It is also impossible to know if you are a similar age or if they are male or female. Online meetings are not the same as offline



meetings. Honesty and a sense of safety is especially difficult to glean when you are online.

Predators are known to use bots (robots programmed to run automatically across the web to complete specified tasks such as post to a public profile) to scan the internet looking for public profiles to send a message and initiate a chat. It can be difficult to know if you are responding to a bot or a real person. When a person responds to the bot, the predator can then take over and chat to the target. Bots are to scan and contact thousands of profiles quickly.

How to protect children online

Ensure all social media and gaming profiles are private. Most social media profiles are public until they are turned to private.

Where possible supervise any open forum chat. Often young people join chat rooms to get help with games, cheat sheets and computer settings. There are thousands of open forums online for gamers and interest groups.

Suggested topics for discussion:

1. Identify the chat sites the child or young person is familiar with using.
2. Identify any gaming sites that allow multiplayer options. (Predators often approach children here.)
3. Identify the difference between public and private profiles.

This varies according to the site however, public profiles can be viewed by anyone allowing everyone to see personal details. Private profiles keep posts and details available to only those that have been befriended. Some sites allow for posts to be marked public or private.

4. Identify the setting to turn a profile setting to private.

Profile settings differ according to the site the young person is on. Each gaming and social media site has a help section to guide you on how to turn the settings to private.

